

104TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. J. RES. 51

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 2, 1996

Referred to the Committee on International Relations, and in addition to the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

JOINT RESOLUTION

Saluting and congratulating Polish people around the world as, on May 3, 1996, they commemorate the 205th anniversary of the adoption of Poland's first constitution.

Whereas, on May 3, 1996, Polish people around the world, including Americans of Polish descent, will celebrate the 205th anniversary of the adoption of the first Polish constitution;

Whereas American Revolutionary War hero Thaddeus Kosciuszko introduced the concept of constitutional democracy to his native country of Poland;

Whereas the Polish constitution of 1791 was the first liberal constitution in Europe and represented Central-Eastern Europe's first attempt to end the feudal system of government;

Whereas this Polish constitution was designed to protect Poland's sovereignty and national unity and to create a progressive constitutional monarchy;

Whereas this Polish constitution was the first constitution in Central-Eastern Europe to secure individual and religious freedom for all persons in Poland;

Whereas this Polish constitution formed a government composed of distinct legislative, executive, and judicial powers;

Whereas this Polish constitution declared that "all power in civil society should be derived from the will of the people";

Whereas this Polish constitution revitalized the parliamentary system by placing preeminent lawmaking power in the House of Deputies, by subjecting the Sejm to majority rule, and by granting the Sejm the power to remove ministers, appoint commissars, and choose magistrates;

Whereas this Polish constitution provided for significant economic, social, and political reforms by removing inequalities between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, by recognizing town residents as "freemen" who had judicial autonomy and expanded rights, and by extending the protection of the law to the peasantry who previously had no recourse against the arbitrary actions of feudal lords;

Whereas, although this Polish constitution was in effect for less than 2 years, its principles endured and it became the symbol around which a powerful new national consciousness was born, helping Poland to survive long periods of misfortune over the following 2 centuries; and

Whereas, in only the last 5 years, Poland has realized the promise held in the Polish constitution of 1791, has

emerged as an independent nation after its people led the movement that resulted in historic changes in Central-Eastern Europe, and is moving toward full integration with the Euro-Atlantic community of nations: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives*
 2 *of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*
 3 That—

4 (1) the people of the United States salute and
 5 congratulate Polish people around the world, includ-
 6 ing Americans of Polish descent, as on May 3, 1996,
 7 they commemorate the 205th anniversary of the
 8 adoption of the first Polish constitution;

9 (2) the people of the United States recognize
 10 Poland's rebirth as a free and independent nation in
 11 the spirit of the legacy of the Polish constitution of
 12 1791; and

13 (3) the Congress authorizes and urges the
 14 President of the United States to call upon the Gov-
 15 ernors of the States, the leaders of local govern-
 16 ments, and the people of the United States to ob-
 17 serve this anniversary with appropriate ceremonies
 18 and activities.

Passed the Senate May 1, 1996.

Attest: KELLY D. JOHNSTON,
 Secretary.